

James A. Cobbs  
3780 Clyde Morris Blvd., #1501  
Port Orange, FL 32129

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Ms. Kim Ball Norris  
Sr. Policy Advisor for Adjudication  
Bureau of Justice Assistance  
US Department of Justice

RE: OJP Docket No. 1464

I deeply concur with an op-ed in the Daytona News-Journal of today, which stated the following position on the subject docket. This says it all for me.

"...numerous states, including Florida for a while, halted executions as problems with execution methods have multiplied and inmates have been found wrongly convicted. In Florida alone, 22 people have been freed from death row, while 397 inmates are awaiting execution. [emphasis added] Delays are not the problem. Hurrying the executioner's conveyor belt is.

"Until now, federal judges alone had the authority to speed up appeals once a death-row inmate's appeals had been exhausted in state courts. But a little-noticed provision in the USA Patriot Act reauthorization last year strips judges of that authority and grants it to the attorney general. Gonzales' Justice Department is about to write the new rules.

"But Congress already ratified a fast-track approach in 1996. That's the system designed to give federal judges leeway in deciding how fast to handle a death-penalty appeal, once the judges have established that all necessary procedures had been followed in state courts. The death penalty is a barbaric practice that shouldn't be part of American justice. But so long as it is, severe and, if necessary, cumbersome checks, including the judgments of federal judges, should be a minimum. Gonzales intends to remove that minimum and replace it with -- his judgment.

"Neither Gonzales nor this administration can be trusted to write fair and just rules regarding the death penalty."

